

We in this Congress stand firmly for empowering individuals and making sure that they can make choices for themselves. How better can we do that than by allowing them to keep more of their own hard-earned dollars?

I have introduced legislation calling for a reduction in the top rate on capital gains. We are considering a complete overhaul of the Internal Revenue Code, whether we go towards a flat rate tax or a consumption tax. We want to make sure that rather than May 11, that people much, much earlier will be able to begin saving some of their own dollars rather than having to work to keep this Federal Government going.

So we stand, on this side, firmly for reducing that tax burden on working families. Unfortunately, my friends want to talk about all kinds of other stuff.

GUNS AND JUVENILE CRIME

(Mr. BLAGOJEVICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BLAGOJEVICH. Mr. Speaker, today the Senate will debate a series of measures aimed at keeping firearms out of the hands of juveniles and convicted criminals.

As the original House sponsor of three of these measures requiring background checks at gun shows, raising the minimum age for possession of handguns from 18 to 21, and preventing violent juveniles from being able to buy guns when they turn 21, I call on the House leadership to allow a full debate on these important public safety measures.

□ 1030

It is not often that gun control advocates and the gun industry see eye to eye; but in the wake of last month's tragedy in Littleton, Colorado, a consensus is emerging that our gun laws need to be stronger.

The American Shooting Sports Council, the National Alliance of Stocking Gun Dealers and leading gun manufacturers now agree we need to close the deadly loophole that allows kids and criminals to purchase firearms at gun shows.

The lack of background checks at gun shows have made them prime targets for criminals and gun traffickers, where kids and dangerous criminals can purchase guns with no questions asked.

Mr. Speaker, making it harder for kids and criminals to get guns are not cure-alls. But Elizabeth Dole had it right when she said, it is time for the Republican party to stop allowing the National Rifle Association to dictate the Congressional agenda.

BASIC STEPS FOR IMPROVING OUR CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

(Ms. DeLAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, 3 weeks ago, America learned a terrible lesson: Our culture is producing teenagers who are capable of unspeakable violence. We, as a country, must come together to address this complex problem. It is one that requires several answers.

We have students who attend schools without guidance counselors. We have children exploring violent websites alone at night. We have handguns sold and resold without basic safety features or background checks. Our children grow up in a world that is unlike the one that I grew up in.

We need to take basic steps to improve our cultural environment. Families must embrace their children's questions, ideas, hopes and dreams. Adolescence is a difficult time. Our schools must be safe without becoming prisons. Classrooms should be small enough for strong discipline and individual attention. Schools must have guidance counselors and mental health services that presently are shamefully lacking.

Handguns should come with safety locks. Firearms should not be sold to children under 21. Background checks at gun shows, period. The entertainment industry must clean itself up and stop marketing violence to our children.

Let us take these steps together and invest in a stronger America.

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORISM

(Mr. WOLF asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, in the last Congress, the Congress voted to have a national commission to study terrorism; and to date the Congress has not acted on the funding on that commission.

Today I will be offering an amendment in the supplemental to have the funding for that commission. With all the terrorist activity that is taking place, the CIA killings in my congressional district, the World Trade bombing, the bombing of embassies by Osama Bin Laden and others, for Congress not to act on putting the funding in at this time would absolutely be a disgrace.

This is so important that we ought to have a bipartisan commission that looks to making sure that everything that possibly can be done to deal with the issue of terrorism is being done.

AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT OPEN DEBATE ON GUN VIOLENCE

(Mrs. McCARTHY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. McCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, a number of us here today are talking about trying to save our children.

The tragedy that happened in Littleton, Colorado, last month certainly struck this Nation. What a lot of people do not know is that we lose 13 children every single day. That is a classroom every 2 days. I am hoping that here, in Congress, we will address this in a bipartisan way.

Because the American people want their children to be safe. There are solutions that we can come to. There are solutions that we can work together on to try to save our children on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking the people of America to call and e-mail all their Congressmen and say, "We want an open debate." Let this not be a fight. Let us do the right thing. Let us have the debate. Let us talk about all the things that we see going wrong and try to make a correction.

That is why I came to Congress. That is why I am here, to try to reduce gun violence in this country.

TEEN SMOKING IN AMERICA IS A CRISIS

(Mr. HANSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, teen smoking is a crisis which threatens the health and lives of thousands of our youth every day.

As a result of the recent settlement between the individual States and the tobacco industry, a marvelous opportunity presented itself to this Congress, an opportunity to show our dedication to our children by assuring that part of the billions of dollars that will be paid to the States would be spent on teenage smoking. Sadly, many in this body on both sides of the aisle are unwilling to assure that even one penny of this clearly anti-tobacco money is spent to stop smoking amongst our youth.

Why is it important? One, \$78 billion is spent every year on tobacco-related health expenses; \$35 billion in extra tax burden faces American taxpayers every year as a result of smoking-related costs; 1.1 million kids begin smoking every year. And the list goes on and on.

Now, contrary to what some might say, this is not a partisan issue. This most recent battle against teen smoking has seen Members of both parties fighting both for and against tobacco control. As one who has been fighting to end teen smoking for many years, I applaud Members from both parties for their support of tobacco control and express my disappointment that leaders from both parties have refused to take a stand against teenage smoking.

Mr. Speaker, if there was ever a time we need strong leadership in this area, it is now.

JUVENILE VIOLENCE AND GUN SAFETY

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, it is time for this House to schedule a vote on gun safety legislation, legislation to keep guns out of the hands of children.

Often children are their very worst enemy, especially when a gun is involved. Yet, only 16 States have child access prevention laws. In fact, in most States, there are no laws requiring proper firearm storage.

Unlocked guns present an irresistible temptation to young adults and curious children. That is why we must pass legislation like the Children's Violence Prevention Act, to reduce children's access to guns, impose criminal penalties on adults who do not keep firearms out of the reach of children, and require manufacturers to make safe and child-proof guns.

Gun safety legislation alone will not solve the problem of juvenile violence or make our schools islands of safety overnight, because our children's safety must be protected on many fronts. But our children and their schools will be much safer when guns are not available.

CHILDREN'S VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACT

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, there is violence all around us; and I think it is important that we address the question head-on as the Members of the United States Congress and the legislating body that the American people look to.

Guns do kill. And even if there are those who argue against the fact that people kill, guns do not, people use guns to kill. And our children have used guns to kill, so that 13 children die every day by the use of guns.

It is time now to pass the Children's Violence Prevention Act, the simple and direct way of showing the American people that we mean business in saving our children.

I call upon the Speaker to have a debate. I call upon him to review the gun laws across this Nation and find out, where States have enforced gun safety laws, and how children's deaths have come down.

And then, Mr. Speaker, I refer you to the conflict that is going on, in Kosovo, although I support our troops, and I have been to the refugee camps, and I want to see the refugees go home. I think it is now time to have a pause in the bombing and for the allies to seek a negotiated settlement to end the Kosovo conflict and to make sure that the refugees go home sooner rather than later. The longer we wait the more delayed will be the refugees return with a secured place to their homeland. It is time now to seek peace in the Kosovo conflict, that will only begin if we stop the bombing for a pe-

riod of time to allow the peace process to begin.

DEBATE ON GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, before Mother's Day, I joined with congressional women House Members to call on the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DENNIS HASTERT) to schedule a debate on gun safety legislation by June 20th, Father's Day.

What I am hearing from mothers and fathers in my district is, "It is the guns, stupid." The tragedy in Littleton is just another grim reminder that gun violence is rampant, that our children are in danger, and that no community is immune from senseless violence.

In my suburban community of Evanston, Illinois, alone I have been to three funerals in the last 2 years of children killed by guns in the hands of our children.

For the sake of the millions of parents who see their children off to school every day, Congress must act. And there are sensible bills that we can act on. It is time to strengthen our laws to keep firearms out of the hands of children and to break the cycle of juvenile violence.

I feel that I owe it to my granddaughter, Isabelle, and to all the children in the United States and urge Americans everywhere to send a message to the Speaker: Let us debate this issue.

FUNDING FOR 2000 CENSUS

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss funding for the 2000 census, a constitutionally mandated activity that will be the largest peacetime mobilization ever undertaken by this country.

Mr. Speaker, funding for the Census Bureau will cease on June 15 unless Congress acts to change current law. Let me say that I welcome the Republican leadership's recognition of the need to eliminate that funding deadline and agree with it entirely.

Republicans and Democrats disagree on the best way to conduct the 2000 census, but I think we can all agree on one thing, we should not shut down the government in little more than 4 weeks over this disagreement.

The Republican leadership has hinted that it may be interested in a truce on the census. Let us start by doing something we all agree on. Elimination of the June 15 deadline can easily be inserted in the supplemental appropriation measure this House will consider shortly.

I urge all Members of this body, both Republican and Democratic, to support such a measure.

COPS PROGRAM

(Mr. WISE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, there are lots of reasons, and the good news is, of course, that the crime rate has been dropping across the country. And there are lots of reasons.

There are two reasons I think I would like to talk about briefly today. The first is the COPS program that this Congress passed several years ago, putting 100,000 new police officers on the street, hundreds of them in West Virginia; and I believe that that has made a very powerful difference.

But there is another reason, too. Regardless of how that police officer puts on the uniform, whether the COPS program or whatever way they are funded, the important thing is the police officer themselves, the men and women who wear the uniform.

What we need to recognize in this Congress is still, while the crime rate is dropping, the danger that they face is still there, whether they are walking up on a deserted car on a highway, whether they are answering a call in a rural area, whether they are in the city. We need to remember their needs fundamentally and, most importantly, to say "thank you."

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 775, YEAR 2000 READI- NESS AND RESPONSIBILITY ACT

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 166 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 166

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 775) to establish certain procedures for civil actions brought for damages relating to the failure of any device or system to process or otherwise deal with the transition from the year 1999 to the year 2000, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on the Judiciary now printed in the bill, modified by the amendments printed in part 1 of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. That amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. No amendment to that amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in part 2 of the report of the Committee on Rules. Each amendment may be offered only